

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 9-AWASHINGTON TIMES
23 August 1985

Kneewalking to Geneva

It's hardly surprising to learn that the Soviets have been dusting Americans with a dangerous chemical tracking agent. The surprise is that no American scholar has yet identified the chemical as bee dung, while charging that the Reagan regime, by making the dusting public, is trying to sack the upcoming summit.

Other ideas are surfacing instead. Sen. Strom Thurmond, the South Carolina Republican, thinks it might be a good idea to shut our embassy in Moscow. Democrat Patrick Leahy of Vermont wants the administration to implement legislation, sponsored by himself and Maine Republican William S. Cohen, to reduce the Soviet diplomatic contingent here "even if it means the State Department has to expel some KGB agents who are masquerading as Russian diplomats." David Durenberger, Republican of Minnesota, charges that the U.S. protest is "insufficient expression of the seriousness with which the American people view this direct and official Soviet attack on our citizens."

Thanks, fellas. We needed that.

But the senators forget that not too long ago an American soldier was murdered by Soviet guards, and Ronald Reagan responded by declaring his increased desire for a summit. Why get upset about spraying

our diplomats with a little powder from an aerosol can when we have overlooked the spraying of our soldiers with bullets from an AK-47? Where is the sense of proportion?

We are on a slippery slope. Our failure to respond to the murder of Maj. Arthur Nicholson Jr. was a national humiliation, as was our cringing response to the murder of 60-odd Americans aboard KAL 007. In similar circumstances in the Mideast, we have posted rewards, as if to say, "Somebody help us, please." Compared to these incidents, a few Soviet-sponsored truck accidents scarcely seem worth mentioning.

The dusting incident tells us nothing about the Soviets we don't already know. While Washington will overlook anything in order to set the proper tone for a summit (Bud McFarlane's speech listing a few of the U.S.S.R.'s shortcomings is thought by some to be a major provocation), the Soviets go about their business as usual — including, it will be recalled, firing a missile into a neighboring country not too long ago. Their pre-summit behavior — unrelenting aggression — indicates more to come, and they can expect the summit to be a pushover if Ronald Reagan, armed with only a handshake, continues his kneewalk.